

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MEDFORD DISTRICT

DECISION RECORD

for the proposed

FLOUNCE AROUND TIMBER SALE
Environmental Assessment

DECISION

It is my decision to implement Alternative III with its project design features, analyzed in the Flounce Around Environmental Assessment (EA # OR-115-03-01), dated September 24, 2003. Alternative III is described in the EA as the following:

1. Timber Harvesting on Matrix Lands

T. 33 S., R. 1 E. Sections 1, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 22, 23, 27, & 35
T. 33 S., R. 2 E. Sections 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 17, 18, 19, 29, & 31
T. 32 S., R. 1 E. Sections 35
T. 32 S., R. 2 E. Sections 32, & 33

Approximately 503 acres would be treated with four different types of silvicultural prescriptions; density management (346 acres), structural retention (12 acres) modified even-age regeneration (6 acres), and selection harvesting (139 acres) (EA Table 2, page 16 & 9). Approximately 3 to 5 million board feet of timber would be removed. Approximately 28 miles of roads are planned to be improved or renovated, 4 miles will be closed seasonally or temporarily, 1 mile partially decommissioned, and ½ mile fully decommissioned (EA Table 2, page 16 & 13).

Also included in this alternative are fuel hazard reduction treatments. Understory density reduction in low elevation conifer stands, oak woodlands and brush fields would reduce crown fire potential through the removal of ladder fuels as well as enhance growth in younger stands.

The treated areas would provide landscape-wide strategic areas where dense vegetation is reduced, the likelihood of crown fires would be lowered, and the risk of catastrophic change to the ecosystem during wildfires would be lowered.

Understory fuels reduction would be achieved by a combination of three treatment methods.

1. Hand treatment (thin, pile and burn)
2. Slash buster
3. Prescribed burning

The scope of this alternative covers 2625 acres of BLM managed lands, with approximately 529 acres located within Riparian Reserves. Of these, 2625 acres, 1550 acres are included in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). In conifer stands, trees 1" to 6" in diameter would be reduced through thinning. Spacing will normally range from 14'X14' to 45'X45' maintaining a canopy closure of approximately 60%-70%. In oak/pine savannahs and woodlands, hardwoods 1" to 6" in diameter would be reduced through thinning, where spacing will normally range from 15'X15' to 45'X45'. In brush fields, 30%-40% of the shrub species would be thinned where spacing will normally range from 20'X20' to 45'X45', creating a mosaic brush pattern over the project area. There are three secondary benefits associated with fuels treatment, the first is to re-introduce fire back into the ecosystem. The second benefit is to reduce moisture competition by reducing competition within the stand to produce healthier more vigorous trees that are more resilient to large scale disturbances. The third benefit is to increase wildlife forage.

The total analysis area is 21,380 acres in size. BLM manages 7,952 acres (37%) of the analysis area; private industry manages 8,070 acres (38%); Corps of Engineers 2,965 (14%), with the remaining 2,393 acres (11%) being a mix of State and private non-industrial lands and National Forest. Fuel hazard reduction projects, would occur within Administratively Withdrawn, Matrix and Riparian Reserves as designated in the Record of Decision for the Northwest Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS/ROD) p 7. All projects are located on public lands administered by the BLM.

DECISION RATIONALE

The decision to implement this alternative meets the purpose and need identified in the EA and furthers the intent established in the Northwest Forest Plan and Medford District Resource Management Plan (RMP) to manage the matrix lands with commercial forest products as a major objective. Reduction in fuel load would decrease wildland fire intensity and rate of spread if a wildfire occurs. Project design features included in the EA adequately protect environmental resources and minimize the risk of adverse effects which might result from implementing the action. Implementation of this sale would assist in meeting the Medford District Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ) and economic support to local communities.

Surveys for Survey and Manage plant and animal species and cultural surveys have been completed and appropriate protocol buffer measures will be applied.

Alternative I, the no action alternative is rejected because it does not meet the identified purpose and need of reducing wildfire fuel levels in the area. This decision is consistent with the *Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* (1994), the *Record of Decision for the Medford District Bureau of Land Management* (1995), and the *Record of Decision for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines* (2001). The Proposed Action is consistent with the Aquatic Conservation Strategy described in the RMP.

In accordance with the BLM Forest Management Regulations (43 CFR 5003.2(1)), the decision for the timber harvesting portion of this decision **will not** become effective, or be open to formal protest, until the first Notice of Sale appears in the newspaper of general circulation in the area where the lands affected by the decisions are located. Any contest of this decision should state specifically which portion or element of the decision is being protested. And cite the applicable CFR.

The decision will be posted on the Medford District web site <http://www.or.blm.gov/Medford/>. The date of publication of the legal notice will constitute the decision date for purposes of protests and appeals under 43 CFR 5003., other than timber harvesting activities. Protests must be filed in writing within 15 days of the publication of the decision or within 15 days of this decision record. Protests shall be filed with the authorized officer and shall contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision.



Lance Nimmo
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Medford District, Bureau of Land Management

12/9/03
Date